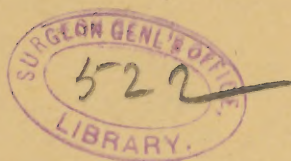


PERSILLER=LACHAPELLE

The President's address -





Report I.C.

✓ AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION,

*Annual Meeting 1894.*

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS <sup>c</sup>

BY

E. PERSILLER-LACHAPELLE, M.D.

MONTREAL, CANADA.

*Your Excellency, (1)*

*Your Honor, (2)*

*Mr Chairman,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*



It is not without a legitimate feeling of uneasiness that I rise on this important occasion, to address you in a tongue that is somewhat strange to me. I avow that the dictates of duty would scarcely be powerful enough to develop sufficient courage, were I not assured, previously, of your benevolence and lenity. Encouraged by this reliance on your indulgence, I shall proceed, and, by being as short as possible, I hope to merit your good-will.

The American Public Health Association, since its foundation, now twenty-two years ago, ever true to its mission, has never ceased to "labor for the advancement of sanitary science—for the promotion of measures and organizations that should effect the practical accomplishment of the laws and principles of public hygiene." It has thus realized the brightest hopes and most enthusiastic previsions of its worthy founders, and has extended

(1) Honorable J. A. Chapleau, Lieutenant-governor of the Province of Quebec.

(2) Mr J. O. Villeneuve, Mayor of Montreal.



its benefits and influence over the whole of North America ; to-day, it embraces the three great countries that form this vast continent : the United States of America, the Republic of Mexico, and the Dominion of Canada, all three working together in brotherly emulation, recognizing no political boundaries, and valiantly striving to attain one unique and humane object : the dissemination to all of the knowledge of public hygiene and the development of respect for its decrees.

It is, therefore, Fellow-members of the Association, with the greatest pleasure—after having taken part in our former meetings in the principal cities of the United States and Mexico, reaped precious knowledge, and borne away happy remembrances—that I see us all, to-day, congregated in this city, the commercial metropolis of our Canada. I know we shall be pleased to again find ourselves united, not only to strengthen the bonds of friendship formed in preceeding meetings, but also to communicate to one another the fruits of recently acquired experience and knowledge, each contributing his mite to help the progress of hygiene among our people, and, so, continue the good work of our Association.

Every year the Association changes its places of meeting, and this for good reasons. The spirit of its founders being to establish, above all, a body for the diffusion and popularization of public sanitary science, this object could not be better attained than by extending to its greatest limits the influence of the Association ; and for this purpose, no surer means could be found than this bringing together of its distinguished members in different, distant cities. There, they are allowed to see and judge for themselves of the wants and progress of the different parts of the continent ; their experience is enriched, they compare observations, and suggest new ideas. Again, by adopting this method of meeting, the same members are not continually called upon to displace themselves, which would often entail considerable sacrifices.

On the one hand, not only do the members themselves derive considerable profit from such changes, but, on the other hand,

and, above all, those congresses in various parts of the continent, immensely facilitate the propagation of our science to the public, by awakening, as they do, general interest wherever they are held ; they help to dissipate erroneous ideas and prejudice by giving publicity to the unbiased opinions of a large number of enlightened and disinterested men on local questions ; they are of great assistance to governments by having those important questions solved according to the requirements of each country they give the authorities strength, confidence, and courage to put into practice much needed measures ; they even force them to act. Schools, universities, local boards of health, municipal authorities, and others, feel the stimulus imparted, and labor on with fresh and invigorating impetus.

Judging, as I do, from what has occurred elsewhere, I feel convinced that Montreal, and this province in general, will reap much benefit from this learned and important congress. Wherever the Association has met, it has stimulated and guided the march of progress, and it is becoming more and more respected and honored by the grateful public, for it ever leaves behind it tangible and irrevocable proofs of the good work it propagates.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Hygiene is no longer the patrimony of physicians exclusively :—it is a science open to all : laymen and clergymen, men and women. It needs supporters and workers in all classes : engineers, architects, teachers, chemists, &c., &c. In a word, it appeals to all who are competent to aid its progress.

This universality of sanitary science has been productive of the most brilliant results ; to it, we owe the greatest part of recent progress. What would hygiene be, to-day, bereft of the admirable discoveries of a layman, the illustrious Pasteur ?—that light of modern science who has created such a revolution in our knowledge of the true causes of contagious diseases, and their modes of spreading ; who has been the forerunner and inciter of all our modern effective methods of prevention and treatment of those scourges and is the real father of actual antiseptic medicine.

All cannot be Pasteurs, but all can work. Every one should



contribute a mite of help or knowledge, thus securing universal interest and cooperation. There should be perfect solidarity as to individuals and nations with regard to public hygiene.

Contagious diseases and epidemics respect no political frontiers; it therefore requires union and a common interest to effectually put a check to their invasion and extension.

The recognition of this fact relating more directly to adjoining countries, has caused our Association, originally founded in the United States, to gradually extend and naturally embrace the three contiguous countries which form North America and whose sanitary interests are identical. It is for this reason again, that it holds its annual meetings in divers sections of the continent, appealing to and bringing together in one harmonious family all the sanitarians of North America, to submit to their careful study health problems which interest them all.

Herein lies the explanation of the immense progress accomplished on this continent during the last twenty years.

Judicious and scientific quarantine has been established in all quarters; state, provincial, and local boards of health have become generalized, and have adopted wise and important sanitary measures and regulations.

Public opinion has been converted: popular prejudice giving way to unwavering confidence. Governments have thus, been enabled, without risking their often precarious existence, to cause important decrees of hygiene to be sanctioned by parliaments, and to have the necessary funds voted to permit of their being put into practice. Hygiene having thus drawn their attention, they begin to understand the necessity of strenuous means being employed to assure its advancement, and they realize the fact, that instead of being detrimental to public commercial interests, sanitary measures favor their growth by protecting the country from disease. They recognize, to-day, that the money and labor spent in upholding sanitary principles are repaid manifold by the security afforded to public health, a more continuous and active trade being thus assured.

May we not hope, that governments, fully realizing the importance of those questions and wishing to afford greater facilities for protection, will soon see the necessity of creating a new de-

partment in their cabinets :—that of Public Health; and that, in the near future, all governments will be advised and supported by a competent specialist—a minister of Public Health? We can easily foresee all the good that will arise from the creation of such a position.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Although it is encouraging and pleasing to note the progress realized, the success obtained, we must not believe the task is done, and that all obstacles have vanished. For instance, the adoption of measures requisite to put into practice the solution of a question of sanitation, collides with two great and serious obstacles : expenditure and personal interests. Such is the case when measures for quarantine, isolation, disinfection, the cleansing of towns and seaports, the prohibition of adulterated food, etc., are put into force.

Quarantine, so needful to protect against the invasion of exotic epidemic diseases, is no longer, thanks to the progress of hygiene, what it was formerly : detention is shorter, I may say, practically suppressed by our modern methods of effective disinfection ; but, nevertheless, even the slightest delay in the unloading of a ship begets expense, and brings constraint on personal interests.

I might say the same of the other measures mentioned : each calls for expenditure of money, time, and labor, and is sure to affect the interests of some one.

In this way, opposition is brought to bear on the introduction of would-be effectual means of protection, by persons who are really wronged, or believe themselves so. On the other hand, those for whom protection is sought, are mostly indifferent to the labor and worry that is expended for their safety.

It is not surprising, then, that governments and parliaments should often hesitate, and frequently withdraw their support. On one side, they have small reason and light pressure to act ; on the other, great influence is thrust forward to make them desist.

What is here needed to insure success is the voice of authoritative knowledge and teaching ; and congresses of sanitary sci-



ce, such as this one, composed as they are of eminent and influential men, can alone furnish cogent authority.

To the pretensions of interested individuals who often, in an exaggerated manner, plead expense and trespass on their private affairs, and to the hesitating, faltering governments that listen to those reclamations and are made to doubt the utility, efficacy, even urgency, of the requested measures, we can oppose the authority of decisions rendered on those questions by the most authorized and disinterested sanitarians of various countries; such decisions having been formed in open convention, after serious study and discussion, possess a value and respect which cannot easily be ignored or set aside. We have the hopes, therefore, of seeing governments ignore the opposition of the ones and the apathy of the others to accede to our humane demands.

Such have been the cares and tendencies of our Association since its foundation, and we may state with pride that the results obtained so far, in all directions, are an encouragement to labor on earnestly and vigorously for the achievement of the task that is left to be accomplished. May the success of the future even exceed that of the past.

To fulfill the spirit of our annual meetings, we must then choose questions that require the most immediate decision, study them fully, discuss them attentively, and try to effect a solution of them based on the experience of other countries and on the most recent decrees of modern science. We must bear in mind that ours is a science of application, whose problems may differ according to localities and circumstances; and that, it thus belongs to each state and province to choose questions, and accept solutions most in accordance with local customs, climate, and legislation.

We shall thus have to consider particularly exotic epidemic diseases and communicable affections of local origin in order to discover the most efficient means of protection against invasion by the ones, and against the development and spread of the others.

Ladies and Gentlemen, — The protection against exotic contagious diseases is based on two theories, each having its staunch supporters.



According to the one, epidemics are due to, or are maintained by the unhealthiness of the soil : to insure its permanent salubrity is therefore the best means of preventing and suppressing epidemics. England has supported this doctrine, and spent over a thousand millions in cleansing and purifying its sea-ports.

According to the other, the real danger lies in the importation of the morbid germs : therefore, protection is sought in the efforts to prevent their introduction along sea-boards and frontiers, or, in other words, in the establishing of an effective quarantine service.

Those two doctrines may be equally true, but separately they are not complete. To secure real protection in accordance with the requirements of modern science, of commerce, and of the financial standing of a country, a just medium has to be adopted by a combination of the two doctrines. What has been possible and successful in England, owing to the small extent of coast and land, and to the isolated position of the country, cannot be so in all other localities ; a long coast-line, a large surface of country, and near exposure to infection, would render the sterilization of the soil an enterprise much too expensive and tedious ; the immediate help of a strict and intelligent quarantine service is required.

Quarantine may yet be looked upon as horrible and too rigorous for certain commercial and personal interests, but, on one hand, we all have interests to protect,—and the most vital interests : our health and lives ; and, again, the quarantine of to-day, with its modern perfection, has been reduced to a minimum and has become simply a station for inspection and disinfection. The name alone of horrifying remains of the past. So, all should bow before the general appeal and the general interests of a country demanding protection ; and, instead of obstructing progress, should work actively to help science to render the means at hand still more perfect and less stringent, and invent others more effective and of easier application.

To protect us against fire, accidents, and crime, the law demands of us certain requirements that do not always suit our views or funds ; but, for the general good, we are obliged to yield. Should the law not be even more inflexible and powerful with regard to the dictates of the apostles of Hygeia, that benevolent daughter of Esculapius and protecting goddess whose sole care,

like ours, was to watch over the health of mankind and prolong the existence of each of its beings.

By thus judiciously combining the two doctrines, we may hope to secure almost absolute immunity, and, at the same time, reduce to a minimum the exactions of quarantine and other rigorous measures ; commerce and hygiene may thus be brought to an harmonious understanding, and, hereafter, work in concert.

The calm with which we have witnessed for the last three years, the menaces of cholera ; the success with which it has been repulsed from this continent up to now ; and the effective protection against yellow-fever, provided throughout the Mississippi Valley during these last ten years, by the model quarantine of New Orleans, prove not only the progress accomplished and the efficacy of the actual system of quarantine, but, also, the confidence and cooperation of the intelligent public. This is a great step towards success. Let the good results of our labors be repeated and publicly brought out, and our humane instructions and exactions will soon appear less barbarous.

There is still room for progress, both to oppose the introduction of germs and to purify and sterilize the soil, so diminishing danger, and, at the same time, commercial restraint. Among other things, navigation requires looking into. Is everything done by our great steamship companies, usually so interested, to facilitate our arduous task ? Is the sanitary protection afforded, sufficient ? Have they on board all their vessels, every suggested and available means of stamping out a budding disease and thoroughly destroying its effects ? Have they methods of isolation and disinfection sufficing to protect healthy passengers and save from infection the ports they enter ? Are they sufficiently under the control of health regulations ? Those are questions that deserve our attentive study.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Communicable diseases that arise on our soil, particularly variola, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis, have already often been the objects of our labors, and the results



obtained, both as regards study and practice, have proved that they may be classed among preventable diseases.

Variola, so frequent and disastrous among us, has been vanquished and is now kept in abeyance. The number of its victims, so numerous but a few years ago, has considerably decreased; and, in a short time, we hope it will be an exception to hear of any.

This death-dealing, beauty-destroying scourge will have succumbed to three inflexible agents:—vaccination, isolation, and disinfection. We shall have won in the energetic fight against this fell disease, the gratitude and cooperation, not only of the general public, but more especially of the ladies, and this latter consideration means success to other measures of public health.

The experience of the last fifteen years has proved that the mortality from small-pox is inversely in proportion to the success of vaccination. In countries where vaccination and revaccination are obligatory (Germany, &c.), it ranges from 1 to 2 in 100,000; while in those in which the preservative is less enforced it reaches from 32 to 150. Such statistics are the best argument in favor of obligatory vaccination and revaccination. To convince every one of the necessity for such measures, we must remove: 1<sup>o</sup> all apprehension or reality of danger; 2<sup>o</sup> prove by stern facts and figures the good results obtained. The first consideration brings us to the importance of adopting, after careful study and experiments, the best means of obtaining pure lymph and insuring aseptic vaccination. With those agents no doubt need be entertained as to the danger or efficacy of vaccination. The second point requires the compiling of statistics, and especially the wide-spread publication of the good results. In a short time, by such proofs of utility, the public, and especially governments, will be thoroughly convinced of the urgency of obligatory vaccination and revaccination.

Typhoid fever and Tuberculosis are even more malignant in their ultimate results than variola or great epidemics of other dreaded plagues, because their action is persistent, insidious, and universal. The attention of the public and others, is not thus

thoroughly awakened to the threatening danger, and no efficient opposition is brought to bear against the ravages of those two devastating diseases. No expense or study should be considered to discover means of fully arresting the action of those scourges; the demand is urgent; the answer, vital.

It is deplorable to see the continual ravages of typhoid fever among young people; it seems to maliciously devote itself to cutting off in the prime of life the more healthy and useful subjects; in the end, the result is a most disastrous loss to the community.

Water being the one great medium of its spreading, all efforts should unite to obtain pure water-supplies. The cause and the remedy being known, it is the duty of interested persons and governments to procure such help from sanitary engineering and elsewhere, as will give the desired results. Do our municipal councils realize their responsibilities in this matter, and are they fully alive to their duty? We have before us to be imitated, the examples of the Romans and Ancients, who drew back before no expense or labor, time or distance, to obtain wholesome water, and who built in every country where they ruled, those monumental aqueducts which still excite our admiration.

This points to the urgency of developing and perfecting the study of sanitary civil engineering. It is a science that should be afforded all means of progress, and quickly placed in a position to give its much needed powerful help to the cause of hygiene.

Among all the diseases that have been the subjects of our labors, actually none forces itself more pressingly upon our zeal, than tuberculosis. This implacable affection, that may be rightly termed the scourge of mankind, continues, despite all science and philanthropy, to persistently thin the ranks of mankind, and reap its deadly tribute from every family. To it alone are due the enormous proportion of one-sixth of the deaths from all causes.

Thanks to the discoveries of modern science, we now know that this disease is produced by a germ or microbe; consequently that it ranks among contagious diseases and is amenable to hy-



giene. The resources of sanitary knowledge must therefore be immediately brought into action to perseveringly check its destructive operations.

We are aware, at the present, that, contrary to what has been believed up to those last years, the disease is rarely hereditary, and nearly always acquired. We know also that the germs, once set at liberty by the dessication of the sputum of consumptives, are to be found almost everywhere ; that we absorb them with the air we breathe, and may ingest them in certain foods : milk, butter, cream, or the meat of tubercular animals.

But it is also proven that, even if such are the principle modes of transmission of the germs of this terrible disease, nevertheless, they can implant themselves and evolve only in a favorable pabulum ; that is to say, in a predisposed subject. This predisposition in the person may be either hereditary or acquired from the dwellings and surroundings in which we live, from our occupations, from certain diseases that we may have, or from certain causes that weaken and undermine our system.

Possessed of this knowledge, we may undertake the combat with courage, as we know in what direction to turn our efforts. We must find and reveal the best means not only of preventing the dessimination of germs in the air and their ingestion with food, but also of rendering ourselves refractory to their action and of correcting any existing predisposition, whether hereditary or acquired ; for, with the greater number of contagious diseases, the great point does not appear to be only the hunting out and destroying of the germs, but the placing of the system in such a condition that it may with impunity receive their attacks ; give them no ground to work upon or to feed upon ; in a word, "starve" them out.

The enormous destruction of health and life caused by those three last mentioned diseases and the losses entailed by countries and commercial interests, demand the immediate and cogent interference of governments and municipalities. I again repeat that expenditure is necessary, but there is no excuse for refusing it for such urgent protection.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Not wishing to review all the contagious diseases and sanitary questions that have been and still are the objects of our work and debates, I will simply draw your notice to another question or two which demand the immediate attention of the Association and the co-operation of the public ; I mention food adulteration, alcoholism, and vital statistics.

Food adulteration is, I should say, in most cases, a crime deserving the severest punishment ; it is fraught with danger, and is an important factor in the increase of premature mortality, especially among children. Even when life is not immediately endangered, a chronic intoxication is often produced that insidiously and irreparably undermines the health of many a human being, both young and old.

Urgent appeals should be made to the Press, to Boards of Health, Boards of Trade, and governments to raise their warning and protective influence to eradicate such criminal procedures. Municipal laboratories should be established throughout the land for the detection of such fraudulent doings, and justice should deal rigorously with all offenders.

Could there not be a general understanding, so that in each country, each state and each province on this continent, the same uniform methods of analysis be employed, and the same unwholesome products receive universal prohibition.

Alcoholism is the plague of many northern climates, and we are not without participating in its dire influences. It should not be allowed to escape our vigilant attention, for it is the ruin of health, of society, and of a nation. The Fates point to the gloomy picture of ancient times, but the experience of the past does not seem to have succeeded in rooting out this terrible evil, which is the harbinger and entertainer of the greatest part of all crime and vice. Alcoholism has for its share more than half the occupants of our prisons, hospitals, and lunatic asylums. Not only do those addicted to drinking intoxicating liquors



most of the time throw their entire families upon the state for support, but the latter is also obliged to look after their scrofulous, idiotic, and epileptic offspring, who are incapable of providing for themselves and are often dangerous to society. Their other children, although less affected by the original taint, are generally worthless subjects: lazy, criminal, and degenerate, and form loathsome mediums for the propagation of disease and vice.

Under such conditions as these, and with such dreadful results, we pay too dearly the money that enters the coffers of the state or municipality under the title of tax or license. It is simply speculating on vice, on the ruin of wealth, health, and talents, and such speculation is no wise justifiable, and should not be tolerated under any consideration. By every means in our power this plague should be opposed and if possible exterminated; it is more deadly than contagious diseases and more difficult to deal with. The problem is one for serious study and painstaking measures. Good work has already been done, and if the desired result has not yet been attained by the measures advocated and tried up to the present, let us not be discouraged, but set to work again. Let us find out if there are no other ways of succeeding. Are men sufficiently educated in their childhood on the dangers and terrible consequences of indulging in the use of liquors, even in a social way? And in this as in all other matters of hygiene, why not ask more of education and not trust exclusively to legislation?

To insure the success of the sanitary reforms dictated by the progress and discoveries of modern hygiene, we must obtain the good-will and co-operation of the public. For this purpose, we must set before them plain facts and figures, problems solved and strikingly exposed. It is then of paramount importance to unite our efforts so as to bring each of our national governments and each of our states or provinces to possess and adopt a complete and uniform system of vital statistics, in order to bring out such convincing evidence as will happily impress the public. Plain numbers alone are often sufficient to awaken them to a state of

things they did not surmise. In those statistics should be included not only city districts, but rural divisions also; for, alas! in the country there are still many sad conditions of unhealthiness and ignorance that require to be relieved.

Such are the principal questions which, with the unmentioned contagia: diphtheria, measles, scarlatina, and others, the protection of infantile health and life, the destruction and utilization of garbage and refuse matter in large centers, the purifying and sterilizing of the soil, the action of pathogenic germs, the pollution of water supplies, &c., are to be submitted to our study. I feel confident that, with such a program, this congress will bring forth as happy results as those of preceeding ones; nay, as we are always progressing, we may hope for even more.

The perspective of the future is thus very encouraging. The work done during the last fifteen years has been enormous; what may we not then expect of the next fifteen years? All over the continent, state, provincial, and local boards of health have been organized and are working effectively; associations, conferences, and conventions are studying the most actual and urgent problems of public hygiene; everywhere, already, a prominent position is given to the teaching of sanitary knowledge: universities and schools obtain the services of competent and distinguished teachers, and are being rapidly equipped with laboratories of sanitary science; every city or district will soon have, if it has not already, its municipal laboratory worked by competent specialists.

The practical scientific working is now created and advancing. The generation that succeeds us, luckier than we in this respect, will be in possession of all that is needed to ensure success: we shall drop out wishing them courage and perseverance, and be happy if we can claim to have contributed according to our means to prepare the way for them and render less ungrateful the task we bequeath them.

Without fearing to counteract the designs of God, we may continue to utilize the talents He has given us, in seeking the best means of protecting our health and lives and of attaining the average of longevity.



Without wishing to frustrate the decrees of his Supreme Justice, let us not forget that contagious diseases and epidemics, although they may in a measure serve as punishment for the waywardness of man, are most frequently the outcome of his errors and ignorance in the preservation of his health, and, as such, they should be struggled against.

The protection and preservation of one's health and that of one's fellow being's is not only a right, but a solemn duty.

*My Dear Colleagues,*

As President of the Association, I cannot close this address without acknowledging the zeal and perseverance shown by the Local Committee of Arrangements in the organization of this Congress, which they have so largely contributed to make a success; I am happy, in the name of the Association, to express our gratitude to each of them, especially to their devoted Chairman and Secretary.

To the distinguished statesmen who honour us with their presence, to the citizens of Montreal who are here assembled, and to the ladies who so largely contribute to the brilliancy of this formal opening of our Congress, the Association is grateful. Their presence proves the interest shown in our proceedings and is a powerful encouragement to our labours and a guarantee of further success for sanitation.

To the Press—that true and powerful friend of hygiene—we also owe our gratitude for the interest it has always taken in our meetings and the publicity it gives to our work.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I again renew my thanks for your kind attention and forbearance.







